

ing that it was secret—they were Christians. Yes! Miriam had indeed succeeded in convincing her friend that the Messiah was long since come—she had taught her the fallacy of looking for an event so long past. Together they had pondered over the inspired pages of the sacred volume, imbibing lessons of love and charity, until Deborah became a pious and sincere Christian. These holy studies received an added charm from the secrecy with which they were followed, but now all this was at an end.

"Yet I go, sweet friend!" said Deborah, "to put these lessons in practice. I go into the stormy world; but thanks to your instructions, I go moored to the rock of faith. Oh! would that my father—that all our beloved ones, could say the same—but let us pray for their conversion—who knows but our prayers may be one day heard for them."

About the same day that saw Napoleon land on the coast of Elba, there was at Florence a grand *fête* given by a distinguished *Marchesa*. Her *palazzo* stood on a gentle eminence overlooking the Arno. The descent was formed of terraces covered with the richest and most luxuriant products of that sunny clime, with here and there an arbor composed of the intertwining branches of the vine, and the rich flowering shrubs of the country. Within those fairy grounds were collected the trees and flowers of the south of Europe—while even Asia had contributed her *quail*, for there over the silver stream hung the graceful boughs of the "lone *Acacia*," shedding its sweets around upon the air. In one corner of the spacious grounds rose a little pagoda composed of native Italian marble—this was furnished as an oratory, having a small altar, and was used by the *Marchesa* as a place of retreat when weary of the world she sought to hold communion with her God.

It was a lovely evening, even for fair Italy—the world of nature was rich in beauty, but fairer than all were the forms that glided amid the alleys, their light drapery contrasting with the rich dark green of the surrounding foliage. The city of the Medici had poured forth her proudest and loveliest to grace the scene—artists were there who have shed on fair Florence even more glory than the illustrious deeds of her nobles—men, the creations of whose genius adorn the stately halls of Europe's royal dwellings, and are looked on as the richest possessions even where all around is splendor.

There were mingled, too, with the Italians themselves, French and English, and even Swedes—in short all strangers of distinction had been invited, for the *Marchesa del Altora*

celebrated on that day the anniversary of her only son's birth. Lorenzo del Altora had on that day completed his twenty-first year, and never had mother more cause to rejoice in a son than had the *Marchesa* in her's. Amongst all the youthful nobility of Florence none was handsomer or more accomplished. Generous and high-spirited—ardent in his friendship—and unlike his countrymen in general, quick to forgive, Lorenzo was universally beloved. Never was truer heart or more intense devotion to any beloved object, and his mother's fears were ever awake lest he should form some unworthy attachment. Yet of this there was little danger—for there was in him an innate nobility which ever secured him against the wiles and artifices of the worthless and base. The most unerring perception of right and wrong had from an early period marked his character. Such was Lorenzo del Altora, who at eighteen had inherited his father's title with his large possessions, yet, had now attained his twenty-first year without being infected with any of the vices to which young men of fashion were and are exposed.

It was the evening, as we have said, of Lorenzo's *fête*—the guests were scattered through the grounds—some were formed into little knots, and stood chatting over the various topics of the day. Some were seated in the little arbors enjoying the beauty of the scene, together with "the melody of sweet sounds," for in various quarters, concealed, however, from the public view, were stationed performers, whose *hautboys* and French horns, clarionets and other wind instruments, "by distance mellowed, breathed upon the ear"—and died away on the calm surface of the blue river. It was a scene of almost unearthly loveliness—there did Italy display all her own peculiar characteristics—her deep ultra-marine sky—her unequalled luxuriance of foliage, and herbage, and flowers—her calm, soft air, and her cloudless sunshine. The latter, however, was now becoming more dim and faint, for the twilight was approaching. And oh! the twilight in that fair *Val d'Arno*!—softly and noiselessly did it come—adding grace even to that scene which one would have deemed required none.

The *Marchesa* was seated on a low rustic bench not far from the door of her oratory—by her side stood Lorenzo, his dark yet fine countenance beaming with admiration as he gazed on a young girl who was seated by his mother. And what was there in her face which attracted the eye of that proud young Florentine? Was it blooming in radiant beauty as were many of those around? No! no! there was no beauty of colouring—the face was pale, nay, almost blood-